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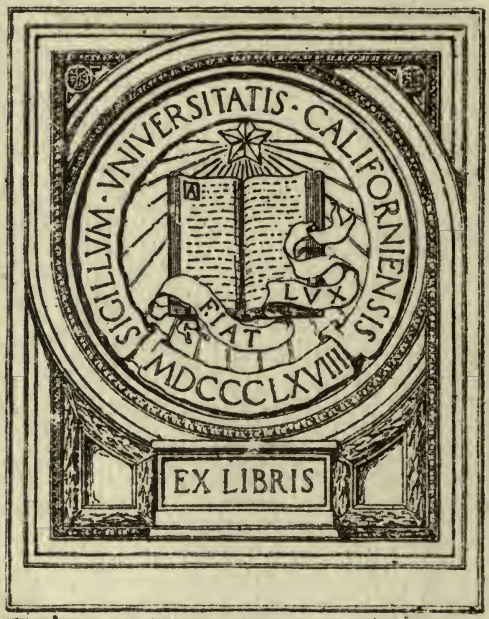


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# THE WRECKERS

Cornish Drama by H. B. BREWSTER.

Music by ETHEL SMYTH.

ETHEL SMYTH by JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.

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# THE WRECKERS

(LES NAUFRAGEURS)

**Cornish Drama in 3 Acts,**

BY

## H. B. BREWSTER.

SET TO MUSIC BY

## ETHEL SMYTH.

Translated from the French, to which language the music was originally written by the Composer.

(The Lyrics marked = . . = translated by ALMA STRETTELL).

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1909.

Gift of Prof. Perkins.

## NOTE.

This Cornish story, happening in the middle of the 18th century, when the coast population was practically beyond the reach of civilisation, is partly founded on fact. The moral position involved, *i.e.*, the belief that wrecking was not only a natural and blameless practice, but that a ship on the rocks was a sign of special divine favor, is a matter of history to which many writers bear witness (see Heath's "Account of Scilly"; Southey's "Life of Wesley"; Journal of the R.I. of Cornwall, etc., etc.)

Wesley himself was powerless to combat successfully this terrible hereditary instinct peculiar to the Cornish peasantry, among whom he found his most devoted adherents; nothing but the gradual opening up of the peninsular finally eradicated it.

A similar state of things existed till recently in Brittany, where to this present day the Bretons say of the sea: "*la mer est une vache qui met bas pour nous.*"

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# MUSICAL ANALYSIS.

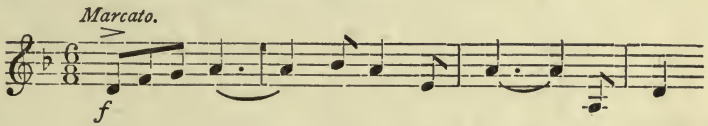
The basis of the music is seven or eight themes, some illustrating predominant moods of this Celtic people of that epoch, such as romance, religious fervour, cruelty; some suggesting aspects of nature; and some associated with particular characters. The impersonal themes have been blended almost unconsciously with those distinctive of personality, it being obvious that no individual, even at his most characteristic, can divorce himself from inbred associations.

Thus, when Thirza is raging against the mingled piety and barbarity of the Wreckers (p. 18), their themes flash as it were spontaneously across her mind, and form the orchestral accompaniment of her free song. The same in Act II. when Mark wishes to light the beacon, or later when Thirza herself does so. But to multiply instances would be tedious.

The complete statement of most of the themes occurs in Act I. as a natural outcome of the situation, and from thenceforward they become an integral part of the music.

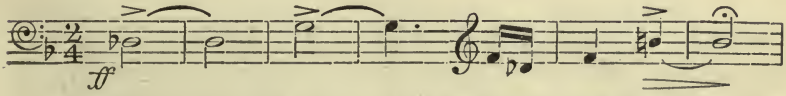
## ACT I.

No. 1. The Wreckers' Theme.




indicative of abrupt savage energy. (See beginning of the Overture and Wreckers' Chorus, p. 9).

No. 2. Horn Signal.




A weird call in use among Wreckers (see 2nd Section of the Overture where it is followed by a scream of wood-wind and harps suggestive of the whistling of wind and frightened sea-birds; see also Jack's action, p. 38).

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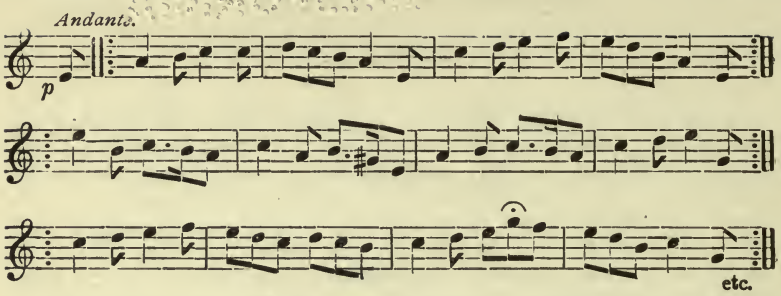
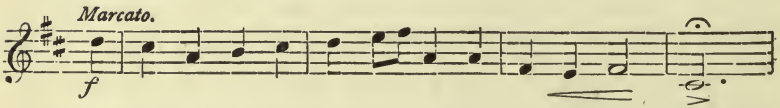
No. 3. Cornish Melody.



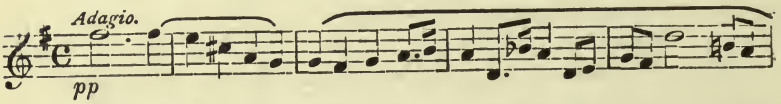

Associated with Mark, and recurring whenever the mood is tender, yearning or lofty (see 3rd Section of Overture, and "Ballad of the Slain Lover," p. 13).

No. 4. Revival Theme.



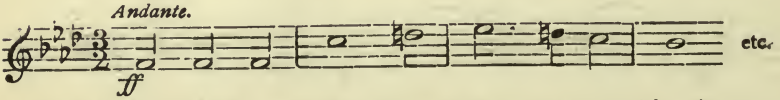

A broad, exultant tune, such as might conceivably spring into life at a period of extreme religious fervour, and in which the composer has used intervals familiar to all who know our folk-music (see latter part of Overture and "Revival Hymn," p. 9).

No. 5. Thirza's Theme.



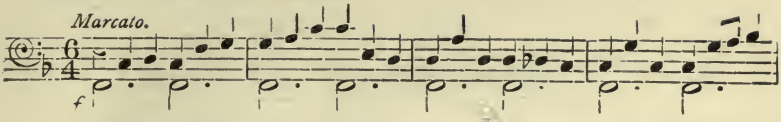

A dreamy sensuous melody entirely dedicated to the heroine (see her entrance, p. 12, and the Love Song, p. 17, where first the violins, then the horns and violoncelli, and then again the violins have this theme).

No. 6. Bach Chorale.



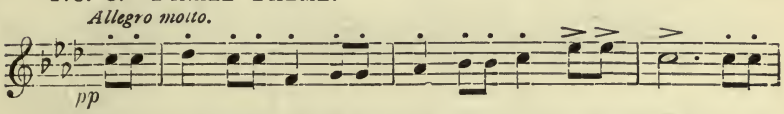

An old Church melody that occurs only in this Act as accompaniment to Thirza's frenzied vision of the scenes on the beach, and as a "*basso ostinato*" sung by the old men to the wild Death Dance with which Act I. ends.

No. 7. Pascoe's Theme.




A theme indicative of iron tenacity of purpose (see Pascoe's song, p. 19, and also the Jubilant Hymn, p. 21).

No. 8. Finale Theme.




A theme of secrecy and haste, appearing in Section 4 of the Overture (crossed by the Wreckers' and the Revival themes) and as basis of the Finale (see " Rather say, foolish maiden, etc.," p. 22).

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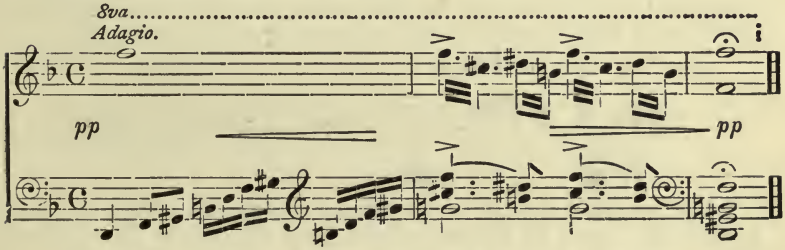
# ACT II.

## THE PRELUDE.

In the Prelude of this Act ("On the Cliffs of Cornwall") most of the new themes occurring in the Opera are to be found; it is a summary of Mark and Thirza's love story, passing through the agony of hopeless longing, to possession and death.

The first three bars usher in the oft recurring theme of the great protagonist, the sea.

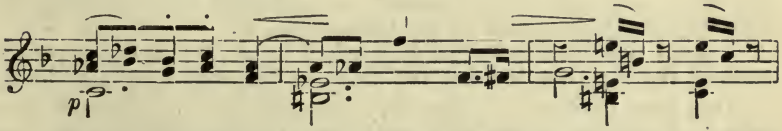
No. 9. Sea Theme.




This leads directly to the first indication in the bass, and in minor mode of the love theme (a glance at No. 13 will serve as guide).

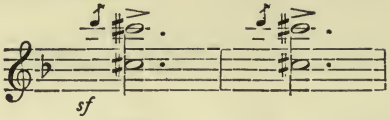
Then comes

No. 10. Childhood.



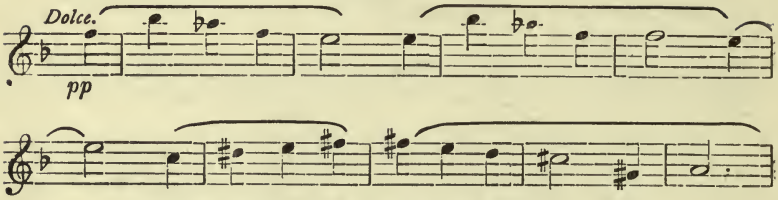

This is the theme of Thirza's Love Song (p. 30), in which song occur also the following two themes:

No. 11. The Sea-bird,




and

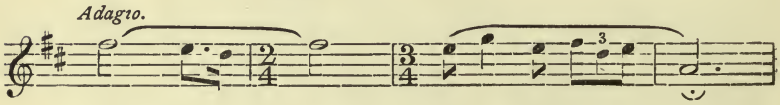
No. 12. The Stars are Alight.




(see the words "The stars are alight," p. 30).

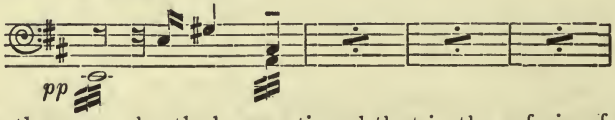
After this, the flute softly introduces:

No. 13. Love Theme.




This theme, found at the culminating point of the Act when the beacon is fired (see "Blaze, fire of love, in deathless splendour," p. 31); here also reaches a *ff* of triumphant exultation; then, dying away, the melancholy cry of the sea-bird is once more heard, and presently those who recall the soft boom of a wave in a cavern will recognise in the following an anticipation of the Drama's end.

No. 14. Death Theme.



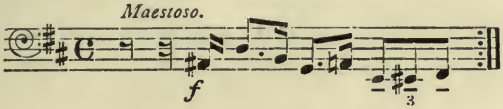

Further may shortly be mentioned that in the refrain of Mark's Lament (p. 27) as in Thirza's Love Song (p. 30) the Cornish tune will be met with; that the impassioned meeting of the lovers is based on Thirza's Theme (No. 5); that throughout the agitated portions of this Act the rhythm of the Wreckers' Theme is the basis; that the Horn Call (No. 2) is the note of warning to the lovers (p. 30); that Pascoe's discovery of Thirza's complicity in the beacon-firing is heralded by her theme (No. 5).

Note the fierce entry of Pascoe's Theme (No. 7), when at the end of the Act the lantern ray falls on his face, and Avis cries: "This face ye know"; also, immediately after it, the sharp stern unison statement of the Revival Theme in minor mode (precursor of what the Wreckers consider sacred vengeance) to which the curtain falls.

# ACT III.

There is no fresh thematic material in this Act (though new and more tragic versions of the old themes) except :

No. 15. Theme of Condemnation.




typical of the judicial rights this Cornish *Vehm-gericht* arrogates to itself. After the Prayer, this theme ushers in Lawrence's statement to the Court, and as heavy *canto ostinato*, now in the lower, now in the upper voices, forms the basis of his repudiation of Avis (page 39) and of the great Chorus of Condemnation (page 39).

A point for musicians is the fact that the Song of Denunciation by Avis (p. 36) though modulating with extreme freedom is tied throughout to the note *f*; which, unceasingly reiterated, generally by the horns, marks the frantic obsession of a desire for vengeance.

As Pascoe tears himself away from his doomed wife, and the crowd prepares to leave the cavern which the sea is already invading, the Death Theme (No. 14) makes a soft entrance, as in the prelude to Act II ; then booming louder and louder, together with the sea *motif*, it finally merges into the Cornish melody, which here makes a final majestic entrance as the "organ, thundering on for ever" (p. 42).

With one last cry of the Love Theme (No. 13), in the violins, the drama ends.

# THE WRECKERS.

## Cornish Drama

*IN 3 ACTS*

BY

## H. B. BREWSTER.

### PERSONS.

| | |
|---|---|
| PASCOE ... | headman of the village and local preacher, aged 55 |
| LAWRENCE ... ... ... ... | keeper of the lighthouse |
| TALLAN ... ... ... ... ... | keeper of the tavern |
| HARVEY ... ... ... ... | brother-in-law to Lawrence |
| JACK ... ... ... ... ... | son of Tallan, aged 15 |
| MARK ... ... ... ... ... | ... a young fisherman |
| THIRZA ... ... ... ... ... | wife of Pascoe, aged 22 |
| AVIS ... ... ... ... ... | daughter of Lawrence, aged 17 |

Fishermen, miners, shepherds and their womenfolk, all Wreckers.

SCENE: a village on the wildest part of the Cornish coast.

TIME: the 18th century, in the early days of the Wesleyan Revival.

# ACT I.

## SCENE I.

*A Cornish village on a cliff above the sea; in the background a Wesleyan Chapel; on the right Pascoe's cottage: beside it a rough framework for hanging up fishing nets, an old boat, keel upwards, etc. On the left a tavern, stone benches, and a table. Villagers enter in rough procession singing; it is Sunday afternoon, in the late Autumn; the Chapel bell is ringing.*

**Crowd** (*REVIVAL HYMN*).

God's Chosen shall not pay the price of sin,
For Jordan's blessed wave has washed them white,
At Heaven's gate behold they enter in
Exulting dwell for ever in the light
And praise the Lord and serve Him day and night.

(*Tallan and Jack step out of the tavern*).

**Tallan.**

The pleasantest way of putting the Devil to shame
Is to kindle the fire of sacred zeal with wine.

**Crowd.**

If that be so, bring wine of the very best!

**Harvey.**

Nay! tempt them not to drink on the Sabbath day,
Ye know 'tis a deadly sin, that Pascoe forbade it.

**Tallan** (*pouring out wine*).

Ah! but the Shepherd is far from his fold to-day,
Courage, ye Faithful! fill your glasses like men,
And if the pastor upbraid you, dare his wrath;

(*a gust of wind: distant thunder*)

A storm is brewing; may it bring us luck!
O Southwind, hear the cry of starving mortals,
Ope thy bountiful arms, and bring us bread!

**Crowd** (*WRECKERS' CHORUS*).

Haste to the shore, the storm-clouds fly,
The breakers roar, the sea-birds cry,
Wreckers awake, for luck has come!
Hark! a crash!—with a noise like thunder
A ship has struck, ere long must founder,
Out with your ropes, haul in the plunder,
Gold and silver, Hollands and rum!

See the casks in the breakers swimming,
Soon shall be poured from tankards brimming
  Fire and love into veins grown cold.
Plenty for all, and never a maiden
But trips to the dance with jewels laden,
  Bought by her lover with dead men's gold.

Haste to the shore! the storm-clouds fly,
The breakers roar, the sea-birds cry—
  Awake! for luck has come!

## SCENE II.

*Enter Pascoe; all put down their tankards with signs of embarrassment.*

**Pascoe.**

Well may ye hang your heads in silent shame!
Are ye then heathen, that on God's own threshhold
Yea, on the Sabbath day I find ye drinking?
O fools, whose stubborn hearts the Lord hath hardened,
Whose ears are deaf to counsel, 'tis enough!
Ye harken not nor heed me; go your ways!

(*he turns to go*)

I cannot come to Chapel; to her bedside
A dying saint has called me.

**Harvey and Crowd** (*intercepting him*).

Nay, have patience,
Thou art our guide, our Shepherd; if thou leave us
To perish in our sins, whose hand shall save us?

**Pascoe** (*solemnly*).

Our nets are empty, barren the land,
  And the pangs of hunger rend us,
No foundering ship flings wealth on our strand,
  Nor tempest nor calm befriend us
Because we have forgotten the Lord,
  Who, loving His Chosen people no more,
Doth stand at the helm of the foreign ships
  And steers them in safety past our shore!

(*exit slowly*).

**Crowd.**

The curse of Heaven doth on us lie!
Our God is deaf, hears not our cry!
If we repent not we shall die!

## SCENE III.

*Lawrence and Avis enter from the other side; the latter looks after Pascoe scornfully, and bursts out laughing.*

**Avis.**

And does the Prophet say the Lord is minded
As punishment for sin to steer the ships
Safe past our rocks, that we may starve and perish?—
Was this the sermon?

**Crowd.**

Yea! 'twas thus he spake.

**Avis.**

Father, you hear! they take his word as gospel,
  But e'en for these, mere clay in Pascoe's hands,
The hour has struck! let them be fooled no longer,
  But tell them what you saw upon the sands.

**Lawrence.**

Last evening when my work was ended
  Homeward at length I took my way.
My heart was sad, my nets were empty,
  Grimly I strode across the bay.
I scanned the cliff's uplifted crest,
  I marked the sea at its stern base foaming
And rounded the point—my heart stood still—
  Amazed, I stared aloft in the gloaming,
For high above me a beacon blazed,
  A treacherous signal, built to guide
And save from their doom the foreign craft;
  O men, in our midst doth a traitor hide!

**Crowd.**

A traitor leagued with the foreign ships?
Up, up, and hunt the vermin to death!

**Lawrence.**

And I, poor fool, when seas run high
  Have darkened my lighthouse lamp for naught,
In vain have risked my precious neck
  Since treacherous hands for the foe have wrought!

**Crowd.**

Who e'er thou be, on mast or tree
  High shalt thou swing when thou art caught.

**Tallan.**

I scarcely can believe my ears!
No clue was left upon the shore?

**Avis.**

We need no clue, I know his name.

**Lawrence.**

Stop, I command you, say no more,
A comrade's honour is at stake.
Perchance, alas! a life to lose;
Rivers are few, though rills abound,
Not ev'ry bud becomes a rose.

**Crowd.**

Who brings a charge good proof must show!

**Avis** (*scornfully*).

Yes! men need proof—but women know!

## SCENE IV.

*Suddenly Lawrence signs to the crowd not to pursue the conversation; enter Thirza from the back; all avoid her markedly; she walks proudly up to the cottage, takes out a key and begins unlocking the door.*

**Harvey** (*with malice*).

'Tis Thirza come in time to join our prayers!

**Thirza.**

Not so! Too ill your prayers and mine accord.

**Harvey.**

Would she insult us?

**Tallan.**

Nay! for once her husband
Is not at home, and when the cat's away
The mouse is free to play, as young things will!

**Crowd.**

Unworthy though we be to kneel with you
Yet, Thirza come, lest pride should have a fall.

**Thirza** (*with anger and contempt*).

I rank not with the godly, as do ye,
Nor care to join you; pray amongst yourselves!
My lips refuse to breathe such prayers as yours.

(*She enters the cottage and shuts the door violently. Some laugh, some are angry.*)

**Crowd.**

Proud jade! She scorns our Chapel and our prayers!

(*The Chapel bell rings violently*)

The bell, the last bell sounds! We shall be late.

(*The crowd hurries into Chapel; Lawrence looks thoughtfully at Pascoe's house; Tallan approaches him*).

**Tallan.**

Quick, tell us Lawrence, has the girl a clue,
Or was it only fancy?

**Lawrence** (*to himself*).

Guard, O Lord,
The door of these my lips, lest they accuse
A blameless man! (*aloud*) nay, nay, there is no clue.

(*Lawrence, Harvey and Tallan enter the Chapel.*)

## SCENE V.

*Avis is in the background gazing eagerly up the sea-road, Jack hovering near her.*

**Mark** (*behind the scenes*).

(*BALLAD OF THE SLAIN LOVER*).

"The wind is cold, the sky is sad,
And wet my brow with drops of rain,
The first true love that e'er I had
In yonder wood lies foully slain."

**Jack** (*to Avis*).

Remember, 'tis my turn to sit
Beside you!

**Avis** (*impatiently*).

Yes, but do not wait.

(*Exit Jack into the Chapel, Avis hides herself. Enter Mark.*)

**Mark.**

"I will do for the love I bore him
All that fair young maiden may.
I'll sit beside his grave and mourn him
Twelve long months and yet a day."

(*Mark has gradually approached Thirza's door and pauses.*)

**Avis** (*to herself*).

His thoughts are far away—not, not with me!
(*steps forward*)
Good morning! Is it thus you keep your word?

**Mark** (*starting*).

My word? What did I promise you, and when?

**Avis.**

I thought you were to walk with me to Chapel
And bring me home.

**Mark.**

'Tis true—and I forgot!

**Avis** (*jestingly*).

Beware lest once too often you forget!
There is a wise old saw 'twere well to heed—
"Who watches not his treasure may be robbed."

* (*SONG.*)

There's a bough, the birds all choose it
For their joyful first Spring-song.
He who would with love go playing,
Let him not forget the saying
That was taught when we were young,
"Guard thy treasure lest thou lose it."

There's a maiden, all men choose her,
For the fairest they have found her;
When she trips along the street
See the fisher lads surround her,
Every heart is at her feet!—
Swains, be wary, lest ye lose her!

"Dost thou ask a heart as token,
Avis? here is mine!
Blossoms from the stem fresh broken,
Avis? they are thine!
At thy wish the moon from heaven
Shall be thine alone!"
But to all the maid hath given
This reply: "Begone!"

* Old Breton melody.

One there was who touched her heart
  Though he cruelly crossed her!
But another suitor came,
Asked the maid to change her name . . .
Dumb her first love stood apart . . .
  So it chanced he lost her!

---

**Mark** (*gently*).

Avis! although these words may grieve your heart
  Yet listen, for alas! they must be said.

**Avis** (*aside*).

The blow is falling . . . God! he loves me not . . .

**Mark.**

  I am but young, and yet my heart is dead.
Mark how an ocean mist creeps slowly shoreward,
  Drinks up the light and chills the warmth of day . . .
E'en so with icy breath some passing hour
  Breathed on my soul, . . . and Love has flown away!

**Avis** (*viciously*).

Your other sweetheart, when did she supplant me?

**Mark** (*coldly*).

These are but foolish words.

**Avis.**

  And yet reply
You dare not! well, keep silence; but know this,
Your secret I shall know ere long; good-bye!—

**Mark.**

What secret here? The dearest child on earth
Bestowed her love on one of little worth;
Her heart was wrung, yet, being but a child
The wound was quick to heal; one day she smiled, . . .
Smiled through her tears, to weep no more, and so
'Twill be with Avis—are you coming?

**Avis** (*fiercely*).

  No!

## SCENE VI.

*Mark goes into the Chapel. Avis laughs wildly and bitterly.*

**Avis.**

(*SONG: THE RAT.*)

Ha! ha! ha! The rat's in sight!
Ha! ha! ha! The rat shows fight!
Smite her, kill her dead!
See her run!
Bravely done!
Her blood flows red.

Ha! ha! ha! My heart is sore.
Pit-a-pat! now hear it beating,
As stricken heart ne'er beat before.
Death, my poor heart gives thee greeting . . .
Peace, my heart! It beats no more. . . .

(*She flings herself on a bench beside the table and buries her face in her arms, sobbing violently.*)

## SCENE VII.

*Thirza comes out of her cottage backwards, dragging nets which she hangs up to mend, not perceiving Avis, who dries her eyes hastily.*

**Avis** (*to herself*).

'Tis Thirza . . . did he know she was alone?

**Thirza.**

"I will do for the love I bore him,
All that fair young maiden may. . . ."

(*Avis, recognising Mark's Ballad, suddenly realises that Thirza is her rival; an involuntary cry escapes her. Thirza turns round and runs up to her.*)

**Thirza** (*with concern*).

Child, are you ill? your cheeks are pale as ashes,
And tears unshed hang heavily in your eyes!

**Avis** (*coldly*).

I am not ill, but tired. In resting here
I injure none . . . save those who wish to oust me. . . .

(*Thirza shrugs her shoulders and goes back to her nets; presently she forgets Avis's presence, and sings softly*).

(*SONG*).

Love ! O thou lightening ray,
  Thou cry of joy forth flashing,
Light of the traveller's way,
Shine thou within my soul ;
Love, O fierce tempest, lashing
  Hearts that are faint toward the goal.

Though cowards dismayed should be,
  I to thy fire am driven.
Love, thou wind fresh with the sea
  And rain, the tears of Heaven,
Renew thou, and make strong
  Hearts that thy sword hath riven . . .
O love, I weep, I long,
  I wait for thee !

## SCENE VIII.

*Avis, who has been watching Thirza with growing agitation, has risen as though to accost her. Unseen by both Pascoe has entered ; he stands looking at them with displeasure.*

**Pascoe.**

I ask myself is this a Christian land ?
Mending your nets upon the Sabbath day !

(*Thirza takes the nets into the cottage ; he turns to Avis*).

And you ! around your neck a golden chain,
The while our hapless little ones are starving !
Shame on such vanity ! Quick, give it me !
This foolish toy shall bring some poor man bread.

**Avis.**

(*Flinging the chain on the ground with fury*).

Well, take it then, and may ill-luck go with it !
  If wearing trinkets be so great a crime
Pray what of sins far deadlier, done in secret ?
  But wise the man who shuts his eyes in time !
(*sings*).

"Young wives the while the old man slumbers
  Should watch, and find the duty sweet.
But some, these lonely vigils fearing,
Let in the friend whose ways endearing
  Have often caused their hearts to beat . . .
Oh ! for a husband hard of hearing ! "

(*Laughing she goes into the Chapel*).

**Pascoe** (*to himself*).

Can this poor child be lost on evil paths?
O gracious Saviour, keep her pure from sin!

## SCENE IX.

*Thirza re-appears and remains leaning against the door-post, staring darkly before her.*

**Pascoe.**

I thought to find you praying in the Chapel.

**Thirza.**

Who seeks me there will henceforth seek in vain.

**Pascoe.**

What words are these? You surely must be dreaming.

**Thirza.**

It is enough; my voice will nevermore
Join yours in prayer, unless it be to pray
God may not hear you.

**Pascoe.**

Thirza! are you mad?
The beasts that range the forest world are free,
The Angels too, perchance; but man is born
In bond of law and may not choose his path.
Come, speak to me; what sins have they committed
That with the brethren Thirza cannot pray?

**Thirza.**

Yea! Though their deeds be writ in tears and blood,
Are they not Saints, the chosen of the Lord?
What if they steal? . . . it is but taking tithe,
If guiltless blood he shed, 'tis by God's will
Since blood alone can quench His children's thirst!
With psalm and prayer on lips they trap men's lives. . . .
Oh! how my soul abhors them!—if 'tis thus
The chosen serve Him, would that ye were heathen!

**Pascoe** (*gravely*).

How often must I tell thee that the ocean
Doth feed the Faithful at the Lord's command.
Ours is by right whate'er yon wild waves bring us,
Such is the ancient custom of this land.

**Thirza** (*with growing agitation*).

Then would that I could fly these cruel shores
Your victims, cold and stark beneath the waters,
Appear to me at night and haunt my slumbers,
My daily bread, meseems, doth taste of blood,
And when the South wind blows I die of fear.

**Pascoe.**

Awake thou foolish child! These are but dreams.

**Thirza.**

E'en as the savage hunter laughs at mercy,—
Will cheer his straining hounds upon the prey,
So ye, in monstrous league with night and tempest,
O fiends, to ruthless Death do point the way!

**Crowd** (*in the Chapel*).

Up Lord our God, avenge Thy name,
And whet Thy sword our foes to smite,
Their hosts o'erwhelm, their bones consume,
Till all the earth proclaim Thy might!

**Thirza**

(*Savagely, as if participating in the scene she describes*).

No landing here! Back, back into the sea,
For dead men tell no tales . . . quick, hand the dagger!
You there whose mouth is filled with sand, whose eyes
With salt are brimming, thus I silence thee! . . .
Men, women, children, kill them everyone! . . .

(*She laughs wildly*).

Merciful Saviour, feed us with the flesh
Of these our brethren! Praise the Lord, Amen!

(*Thirza would rush away, but Pascoe stops her*).

**Pascoe** (*sternly*).

These are the frantic words of one distraught,
But I perceive that Satan's hand is on thee. . . .
Nay, answer not, it is for me to speak.

(*SONG*).

'Mid barren rocks dwelling where no man may sow nor reap,
The Lord bade our harvest spring forth from the womb of the deep.
"With grateful hearts take ye," said He, "what the ocean sendeth—
"The white-wingéd ships be your flock, that its way slowly wendeth
"Toward yon red cliffs, as to shambles set high o'er the flood!"
On God's mighty name do we call, as we shed that blood!

With drops of red rain were the meadows of Canaan watered,
And now, e'en as then, are His foes by the Faithful slaughtered!
Yon stern crags our nurse, chosen comrade of wind and wave,
Small wonder our wild Cornish coast breeds a hard race and brave;
Our banner, the fair spotless fame of the women who bare us,
United we stand, and defy, like our rocks, all who dare us!

**Crowd** (*in the Chapel*).

Amen!

(*Thirza, seated, is weeping silently. Pascoe approaches her with tenderness*).

**Pascoe.**

For those the sea holds hidden in its depths
Mourn not, nor weep; for were they Satan's seed,
Then Hell has claimed her own; and if God's children,
The sooner shall they rest them from their labours,
To gaze for ever on their Saviour's face. . . .
For ever near Him, basking in His love. . . .

**Crowd** (*in the Chapel*).

Our souls, redeemed, shall never taste of death.

**Pascoe.**

Then dry those piteous tears and weep no more,
My child . . . my love!

**Thirza** (*starting up*).

I loath you! Touch me not!

(*She rushes away.*)

## SCENE X.

*Pascoe staggers backwards to a bench, where he remains motionless throughout the following scene. The crowd comes out of the Chapel, surrounding and complimenting the Preacher.*

**Crowd.**

Thus, O thus should the Word be preached!
He made one feel that Satan was near,
One almost saw his horns and his tail,
And felt a scorching breath on one's ear!
He shouted and thundered, the rafters shook . . .
Ah me, what a saint the Preacher must be!
He broke us, crushed us and roused our fear,
Till we trembled and shook like leaves on a tree!

(*HYMN*).

The Gates of Heaven open wide, let in
Repentant souls but newly purged of sin.
The battle almost won, the victory nigh,
Behold the trembling sinner turn and fly!
In vain he hides, for Satan's hordes will find him,
And soon the jaws of Hell shall close behind him!

*(The crowd moves away, escorting the Preacher; one or two men linger behind. It is sunset; a thickening fog invades the scene.)*

**First Man.**

Strange is the light this evening!

**Second Man.**

And the mist
Is thick'ning; such a night should bring us luck

(*Exit the men. Lawrence, Harvey, Tallan, Avis, and Jack have not followed the crowd, but are grouped together at the back of the stage, watching Pascoe.*)

**Lawrence.**

See, he is lost in thought, and nothing heeds.

**Harvey.**

His soul is by some heavenly vision held.

**Avis.**

Or maybe dark forebodings haunt the saint.

**Tallan.**

I dare not speak to him, so strange he looks.

**Lawrence** (*approaching Pascoe*).

This is no time for dreaming, Pascoe; wake!
To-night there will be work upon the shore
The foreign ships are passing homeward bound,
The fog grows denser, dulls the breaker's roar.

**Pascoe** (*as in a dream*).

The sun is sinking fast, O may a pillar
Of fire move before us; let its light
Shine on our pathway, lest our footsteps stray!

**Tallan.**

Methinks he dreams and hears not what we say!

**Avis.**

Father, he murmured words like "fire at night"

**Lawrence** (*to Pascoe*).

We wait your orders. Speak, your word is law.

**Pascoe** (*getting up*).

Leave me in peace! Begone; do what ye will.
I fain would be alone, . . . alone with God? . . .

(*he goes away slowly*).

## CENE XI.

**Avis.**

There goes a traitor!

**Harvey.**

Avis, are you mad?

**Avis.**

'Tis he, I say, 'tis he the man ye seek?

(*All, except Lawrence, are amazed*).

**Harvey** (*angrily*).

Rather say, foolish maiden, the night is the day.

**Lawrence.**

Not so loud!

**Harvey.**

Than that Pascoe, our Shepherd, his flock would betray!

**Lawrence.**

Not so loud!

**Avis.**

He is ruled by his wife, whom he loves more than life,
And an old man's desire is a fierce raging fire!
This stranger who hates us is young and most fair;
And faith against passion weighs lighter than air.

**Tallan and Harvey.**

When we asked him for counsel he frowned, turned away,
He came not to Chapel, has shunned us all day. . . . .

**Avis.**

It is he who betrayed us, but *she* sowed the seed,
And wrought by foul magic, his will to the deed!

**Lawrence, Tallan, and Harvey.**

Who breaks the law of our coast must die!
We three must watch him
This night and catch him
Lest haply his guilt he deny!

**Lawrence.**

For me, I will watch near the Witches Byre
A likely spot for a beacon fire.

**Harvey.**

And I will hide on the Smuggler's Reach.

**Tallan.**

My post be the boulders on Silver Beach.

**Lawrence.**

Who's for Hell Point? his nerve must be steady,
His foot must be sure. . . . .

**Avis.**

See! Jack here is ready!

**Lawrence.**

Our plan is this; let each man take a horn,
Blow once from time to time, to keep in touch,
But he who finds the beacon, lit or not,
Four separate times must blow, loud blasts and long.

**Harvey.**

Maybe he has striven to conquer her will,
Who can tell?
But the lust of the flesh doth too often prevail!
And he fell!

**All.**

'Tis the work of his wife, I would wager my life
It is so!
For an old man's desire burns fiercer than fire,
As we know!

(*Jack has taken a horn from the tavern, stands in the doorway and blows loudly. The crowd re-enter in haste*).

**Crowd.**

What childish freak has set this young ass braying?

**Lawrence** (*after boxing Jack's ears*).

All hands must spend the night upon the shore.
For if the wind still rise, the fog yet thicken,
There will be need of all you, and more!
Wait not for us three men, we cannot join you,
Have other work to do,
And shall be back at break of day, not sooner.

**Crowd.**

Mysterious words, and few !

(*From the sea, the sound of a gun ; sensation*).

. . . . . .

**Tallan and Lawrence.**

That gun was fired by a ship in danger !
The mist has hidden the warning breakers
And shrouds the coast ; were the moon but younger
Oh what a glorious night for wreckers !

**Crowd.**

Down to the shore ere the good ship founders,
Show the stranger the way to land,
And teach him to tread the wild gay measure.
That all must dance on the Cornish strand !

(*CHORUS AND DANCE.*)

Who's for the dance ? the storm is wailing,
Shall line with gold our barren shore ;
Corpses pale on the wreckage sailing,
'Tis these shall pay the piper's score.

Blood and sea-water mingle gladly,
Snow-white and red the foam will glance,
And many a one be dancing madly
The while our gleaming daggers dance.

**Old Men.**

Up Lord of Hosts, Thou mighty God
And smite the heathen with Thy rod.

(*The gun is heard again ; in wild excitement the crowd rushes away, as the curtain falls.*)

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# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

*A desolate part of the sea-shore ; on the right, a high cliff with a rugged path leading up it ; on the left, boulders ; in the distance, the sea. A moonlight night obscured with fog, which gradually clears, the nearly full moon becoming visible in the course of the Act.*

**Jack** (*behind the scenes*).

Come back! come back! I see you, knave!
  Hi! traitor, stop!

(*he appears hurrying down the cliff path*)

. . . No soul in sight
Strange! if she really saw a man
  The man has vanished in the night.
She spies the traitor everywhere,
  And I each time her word believe,
Meanwhile the rogue is safe in bed
  And laughing at us in his sleeve.

(*enter Avis, breathless, much excited*).

**Avis.**

Well, was it Pascoe? Speak, be quick!

**Jack** (*crossly*).

No! but it may have been his ghost.

**Avis.**

His ghost! Why, Jack, you must be blind,
  'Twas yonder that the trace I lost;
I saw him creep from rock to rock,
  The moon was brighter than the sun . . .
O heavens, what a fool was I
To ask the help of such a boy
  Because I thought the boy could run.

**Jack.**

A greater fool you here may view,
Who let himself be duped by you!

. . . . . .

"O come with me and have a pleasant talk
  (She said) along the shore"—
And off I start upon a midnight walk,
  Hoping for something more.
But if perchance I venture near her,
Or breathe a word of the love I bear her,
"The traitor . . . there he goes!" she cries,
And, like an arrow, off she flies.

**Avis.**

My little Jack, I meant no harm,
Say what you please; come, take my arm!

**Jack.**

I fly down cliffs that are slimy and jaggéd
  And plunge through the sharp wet stones;
My boots are tattered, my garments ragged,
  And aching are all my bones.
'Tis little these midnight walks amuse me,
Since do what I will you scold and abuse me . . .
It may be an honour, perhaps, with Avis
  Alone in the moonlight to roam,
But scant are the thanks you get for your service;
  And that being so . . . you go home!

**Avis.**

O Jack, to say I have not thanked you!
  Well, there! (*kisses him*) I thank you with a kiss,
Now listen! though you ill deserve it,
  What I had hoped and planned was this:

. . . . . .

I meant us both to have a pleasant talk,
  Keep on the traitor's track,
And then, as ending to a moonlight walk,
  See Pascoe caught by Jack!

(*Mark appears left and hides behind the boulders*).

Bold Jack the hero of the story,
And Avis humbly sharing his glory!

**Jack.**

O, Avis, I swear I will do my part,
But kiss me again before we start!

**Mark** (*to himself*).

'Tis Jack and Avis, abroad in the night,
And making love with all their might;
And I . . . who feared I had broke her heart . . .
Alas, I have played but a foolish part!

**Jack and Avis.**

Swift o'er the moon-lit shingle gliding,
Then in the shade of the dark rocks hiding,
Sly as a hunted fox, and as fast!
Come, we are certain to catch him at last.

(*Exit Jack and Avis running*).

## SCENE II.

**Mark** (*looking after them*).

Thus do we learn at length to know our worth ;
'Tis true this pretty maid is but a child
And children pangs are ever soon forgot ;
And yet . . . how sad it was to see her weep,
  Her little pride laid low, her love revealed !
My heart was aching ! . . . Vanity of man !
  The wound, if wound there was, has quickly healed !

But no more dreaming, it is time to work . . .
This one last time our flame shall blaze . . and die !

(*Mark collects out of the clefts of the rocks drift-wood, an old tar-barrel, and other rubbish, and begins building up a bonfire, singing the while.*)

* (*BALLAD OF THE BONES*).

When wilt thou give me peace from vain desire
  Since thou alas, my lover mayst not be ?
" When thou thy golden heart, fierce tried by fire,
  " Shalt with thy body's treasure yield to me."

Though ne'er to sweet forbidden love consenting
  My heart is in thy keeping, past return ;
But I can mar my beauty, unrelenting,
  So shall thy love perchance less fiercely burn.

" 'Twere vain, for seek thee, follow thee I must,
  " With tireless ardour, never taking breath,
" Yea, if thy flesh ere joined to mine be dust,
  " My bones at last shall clasp thy bones in death."

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. . . . . .

(*Mark stops working, and falls to dreaming*).

Could I both cease to be, both soul and body—
  Vanish in smoke, as these spent embers die,
Burn, and then sleep as do the flames, in silence—
  Sleep and forget thee—be no longer I !

But if to kill my cruel pain, thy token,
  I shut it in the grave's dark prison deep,
Yet at thy footstep would its chains be broken,
And at thy word, however softly spoken,
  We should arise, like Spring from her long sleep.

* Taken from the Heptameron.

## SCENE III.

*Mark is about to light the beacon with a torch when Thirza's voice became audible ; he throws down the torch.*

**Thirza** (*behind the scenes*).

Mark, stay thy hand! No fire must blaze to-night.

**Mark.**

Thirza, my queen!

**Thirza** (*appearing on the cliff path*).

Belovèd, it is I
Come through the gloom to seek my only light,
To find thee, though 'twere on thy breast to die.

**Mark.**

Thirza! . . . as longs for rain a thirsty land,
I yearned, and were it but to hold thy hand . . .
Waking, asleep, my restless soul sought thine,
And found it not. . . . Oh! give thy lips to mine—
The star of love has risen . . . let it shine.

(*Long embrace.*)

. . . . .

**Both.**

Mysterious power that guides our footsteps, leading
O'er rugged paths and steep, our souls to prove,
Let dawn the hour, when, naught but Love's voice heeding,
Thine own shall bid us live, or die, for love! . . .

. . . . . .

(*Thirza frees herself from his embrace.*)

**Thirza.**

You ask not, Mark, what wind has blown me hither,
Nor guess what sad forebodings fill my heart . . .
For in these arms my terrors droop and wither,
Like foolish ghosts at breath of dawn depart.

(*She gazes out sea-ward.*)

Ye doom'd ones, wanderers o'er a strange sea sailing,
And lured as bird by fowler to our shore,
When fierce the tempest rages, Heaven protect you!
For Thirza's hand may succour you no more.
Ne'er, ne'er again the friendly flame shall greet you,
That sea-ward laughed by night, and danced for joy.

**Mark.**

Who has betrayed us?

**Thirza.**

No one! Evil chance
That led them where the tell-tale ash yet glowed.

**Mark** (*joyously*).

Their prey will yet escape them!

**Thirza.**

On his track
Swift through the night e'en now fierce hounds draw near . .
There stands the beacon . . . hark . . . I hear their horn
O fly, belovēd, fly this spot accursed!

**Mark** (*seizing the torch*).

Come on, ye hounds of Hell! . . . but ere they drag
  Their quarry hence in chains, on some tall tree
  Where four roads meet to swing, their eyes shall see
Unfurl this one last time the glorious flag
  That bears thy pity's message o'er the bay,
  Kindles the wild dark wave, of night makes day!

(*Thirza holds him back*).

**Thirza.**

Stop, madman, would'st thou light thy way to death?

**Mark.**

This is my last farewell! to Cornwall's shores
To-night, in speech of fire, I say good-bye!

**Thirza.**

Thou wilt forsake me? Leave me here alone
To bear in silent shame my heavy load,
Unblessed by love . . . save love far worse than hate?

**Mark.**

Nay! that is past—for though, bereft of thee
Cut off from thy dear love I were but lost,
Yet since mine own thou art, mine soul and body,
No longer will I share, but rather slay thee. . . .

(*He seizes her fiercely, then releases her, and sitting down on a rock, buries his face in his hands. She watches him with infinite tenderness.*)

**Thirza.**

(*SONG.*)

To love is to die, and anew to awaken!
  I was but a child, and my will hard to bend,
But the paths that I strayed on are now forsaken,
  And my heart's one pride is to love my friend.
Whether high the sun doth hang in heaven,
  Or in dusky night the long day doth end,
Lapped close in sweet dreams from morn to even
  In silence my spirit communes with my friend.
The stars are alight, they tremble and quiver
  Like hearts at the message that love doth send,
And down on my soul the kisses rain ever,
  Kisses thrice divine from the soul of my friend.
I yearn to see thee, yet falter and fly thee,
  Still striving in vain my heart to defend;
What should I withhold, or what token deny thee,
  O my Life, my Death, my lover, my friend!

(*The wrecker's horn sounds in the distance.*)

**Mark.**

Thirza! So deeply, dearly do you love me?

**Thirza.**

Ah! more than all the earth, than God above me. . . .

**Mark.**

Then stay not here, but seek beyond our seas
A happier land. . . .

**Thirza.**

O Mark! Alas, I dare not!

**Mark.**

Beyond our seas, on some far sun-lit shore
Where Love shall join our hands, and never more
We two shall part. . . .

**Thirza.**

Alas, my weak heart fails me.

(*The horn is heard again, nearer.*)

**Mark.**

Hark! 'tis the voice that speaks thy travail's doom,
  The spell that chains for ever to thy side
  The gentle pitying hand, that dared to guide
And pluck lost wanderers from a yawning tomb. . . .

**Thirza.**

Helpless to aid them, lonely vigils keeping
Torn by despair and love, forlorn and weeping
Such were my life. . . . O Mark, how can I bear it?

**Mark.**

Then hark! To-morrow when the moon is full,
A swift ship leaves the harbour, bears me hence;
I cannot live without thee . . . come, O come!

. . . . . .

**Thirza.**

On sea of love, by doubt and longing shaken,
My wavering soul drives helpless, storm o'ertaken! . . .
I come . . . though women scorn and men deride,
I come . . . my hero calls me to his side!

(*She seizes the torch.*)

**Both.**

Then burn ye withered branches, burn dead leaves,
  Unfurl, thou golden pennon, seaward fly
And bear our message; upward leap, bold flame
  High as our hearts, and laughing stab the sky!

(*She fires the beacon which bursts into a mighty blaze*).

(*DUET*).

Blaze fire of love, in deathless splendour
  Brave the night, though forbidden thy ray!
Conquer the gloom, flame fierce and tender,
  Shine for the lost, and light their way.

Hearts that endure danger and sorrow,
  Fare toward your hidden destiny
  Far, far off though the goal may be!
We too fare on to an unknown morrow
  By fated paths, over rock and mead
  And follow wherever Love shall lead!

. . . . . .

**Pascoe** (*behind the scenes*).

I seek Thee, Lord, by night
  But Thou has hid Thy face;
How shall Thy servant live
  Thus fallen from Thy grace!

**Mark.**

'Tis he! farewell! . . . . what meeting place to-morrow?

**Thirza.**

Beneath the old sea wall,

**Both.**

from thence to wend
Down to the harbour, sail away from sorrow, . . . .
Come weal, come woe, together to the end!

(*Exit Mark and Thirza right and left; presently Pascoe appears*).

## SCENE IV.

**Pascoe.**

Broken, distraught I cry,
My sin, my weakness owning. . . .
Lord, hear me! . . . . no reply!
Only the ocean moaning. . . .

(*A log falls, the dying fire blazes, Pascoe turns round and sees it for the first time*).

A fire! . . . it is a beacon! . . . Treason, treason!
Yet stay, it cannot be; who would be faithless
When all are of one mind? . . save one alone. .

(*He sees Thirza's shawl on the ground, picks it up*).

My God! the blow has fallen! All is lost. . . .
(*he falls senseless*).

## SCENE V.

(*The fire has died down, the stage is dark; enter softly Lawrence, Harvey, Tallan, Avis and Jack*).

**Lawrence.**

A man lies yonder (*he kneels beside him*).

**Harvey.**

Is he dead?

**Lawrence.**

He lives!

(*Lawrence turns Pascoe over and lets the lantern ray strike his face*).

**Avis** (*with cruel triumph*).

This face ye know!

**The Others.**

Not Pascoe!

**Avis.**

Yes 'tis he!

(*The Curtain falls.*)

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# ACT III.

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## SCENE I.

*The interior of a huge cave, opening through a narrow arch in the background on the sea. The crowd, including Mark, and after an interval Thirza, are descending into the cave by a cleft in the rocks on the left, in which rough steps are hewn, and which leads to the cliff above. This egress is furnished with a strong iron gate. It is the break of dawn.*

**Crowd** (*CHORUS.*).

Naught, still always naught! Yea, our fortune fails us.
Rumours are afloat, of a traitor nigh
Some have talked of witchcraft, or the evil eye.
Some say it is poison. What help then avails us?
Naught, still always naught! Yea, our fortune fails us.

Have ye heard what is said?
That the cliff ever higher
Is lit by a fire
And we are betrayed?

'Twere a villainous act
What proof is to show
It is certainly so?
Who can swear to the fact?

These tales are but gossip, say I,
Sent round the coast as a warning.
'Twas rumoured, that none can deny . . .
Chilly and sad is the dawning! . . .
The cave will be flooded ere morning!

---

Then why in this place are we thronging?
Ere daylight they summoned the court
But the reason they have not yet told . . .
The wind moans and shrewd is the cold.

(*Newcomers enter*).

What's whispered? canst tell us of aught?

**Newcomers.**

Yea! death for a traitor by hanging!

**Crowd.**

Did you hear what they said?
He was caught in the act,
And the gossip in fact—
That we are betrayed.
"Now who is this monster of Hell?"
That no one but Lawrence can tell us,
He tracked and followed him well,
The villain who ventured to sell us!

(*Lawrence, Pascoe, Harvey, Tallan, Avis, and Jack enter*).

They come! speak! what news have ye brought?
Whom, whom in the act have ye caught?

**Lawrence** (*gravely*).

Men here assembled, bound by secret oath,
By you let justice in this court be done—
It yet is dark—let torches be lit up.
(*Torches are placed in rings in the wall, and lit.*)

**Crowd.**

Curt and stern their speech,
Fraught their looks with gloom
Dawn is scarcely breaking,
Dark the shadows loom—
Dimly burn the torches
E'en as in a tomb!

---

**Lawrence.**

The court is opened; pray for light and guidance,

**Crowd.**

O Lord we wander in the night,
Thy sheltering arm stretch o'er us—
Guide Thou our faltering steps aright,
Make plain Thy way before us.

(*Lawrence steps forward: the crowd faces him in a half-circle*).

---

**Lawrence.**

Starving since months, in vain we hoped and prayed
Some treasure laden ship might founder here,
But traitors were at work—my words are proven!
Last night we found a beacon on the shore.

**Crowd.**

O monstrous thing!

**Lawrence.**

Beside the smouldering fire,
Stretched on the beach and swooning, Pascoe lay.
We questioned him in vain, reply he would not.
I therefore called the secret court in haste,
And bid you make him speak, if such your will,
That all things hidden may be brought to light.

**Crowd.**

Yea! We command him by thy voice to speak.

**Lawrence.**

Pascoe, you hear; stand up and tell the Court
What brought you to the spot where yesternight
The beacon burned; we charge you tell the truth
On oath before your God, who reads all hearts.

**Pascoe.**

I am not one to whom his peers give orders.
'Tis mine, by grace of God to lead this flock
And choose the way it walks in. Here I stand,
Who thinks to bend my will has yet to know me.

**Lawrence.**

Enough; then I will speak. This man before you
Who says the ships are steered by God's own hand
In safety past our rocks . . . O cunning saint!
'Tis he himself the traitor that ye seek!

**Crowd.**

Man, thou art surely mad to say this thing!
If Pascoe fall what man shall stand upright?

**Lawrence, Harvey and Tallan.**

Then let him tell us why upon the beach
At midnight he was lurking, what he saw? . . . .
The Prophet is at bay, but answers not!

**Crowd.**

We trust him, love him; why should he betray us?

**Avis** (*pointing at Thirza*).

The Saint betrayed his flock at her behest
Who hates us all, whose slave, whose tool he is!

(*SONG.*)

This stranger who beguiled him, well we know her!
The apple of his eye, his child, his toy!
When heaven sends us luck she weeps and curses,
But when our fortunes fail she laughs for joy.
Kneel we in prayer? Pure Thirza will not join us;
'Tis passing strange a woman should disdain us,

Of whom some folks aver
Church is no place for her,
That naught but ill delights her . . .
Nay, more—that prayer affrights her!

Vile priestess of occult and evil arts,
Potent with magic spells that change men's hearts,
At midnight rank mysterious philtres brewing
Their senses she beclouds, like mists at night!
'Tis thus that Pascoe, lured to his undoing,
And struggling in her toils betrayed the right!

**Thirza.**

I hear thy serpent tongue! I know thy heart
Still falser than the gems thou flauntest in,
And thank thee, Avis, that thou lov'st me not
Since jealousy and hate were ever kin!

(*Turning to the men*).

And ye, who prate of honor, crying shame
On him who fired the beacon! hearts of stone,
This man to save doomed lives has risked his own
And braved your vengeance! Honored be his name!

**Crowd** (*furiously.*)

Woman! Thou dar'st defend him?

**Thirza.**

Yes! I dare!
Well done, brave heart!

**Crowd** (*rushing at her*).

Beware, thou jade, beware. . . .

**Lawrence** (*interposing*).

When women rave, heed not, if men ye be,
But turn your eyes upon the man accused.
I charged him in his Maker's name declare
What deeds were done last night upon the shore.
With downcast mien he stands, in silence shrouded,
And yet methinks his black guilt cries aloud;
Nay! and what sinner, hardened though he be
By crimes unnumbered but would fear to die
And face his awful Judge with lie on lips?

**Crowd.**

Alas! our Shepherd faithless . . . can it be?

**Avis.**

Faithless he is, but think not he will own it,
So great a saint would ne'er confess to sin!

**Lawrence.**

Since he denies not, can ye doubt his guilt?

**Crowd.**

Nay! he is guilty. Pascoe, thou must suffer
The death of traitors—take him forth and hang him!

(*They seize Pascoe; Mark steps forward*).

**Mark.**

Unloose this man, for he has done no wrong—
'Tis I betrayed you!

**Pascoe.**

You! . . . (*fiercely*) then tell me . . . why?

**Mark** (*SONG*).

"Why was it," ye ask me?—Who knows, who can say
Why one man goes straight, and his comrade astray?
But the cup must be drained, be it bitter or sweet.
From horizons afar a voice each must obey
Calls us on down a path that is strange to our feet;
Yea, Fate, unforseen, takes a man by the hand,
And leads him o'er flowers to a sunshiny land
Or by roads steep and stony to dark things unknown. . . .
What if shame be the end, or our brief day seem
In honour to close? . . . both alike are a dream!—
Soon we all shall be sleeping our last long sleep,
Whether 'neath the ground, or the restless deep.

. . . . . .

Now strike!—'tis the game!—kill the dog that is mad!
But know this, that I am not ashamed or sad,
The end was foreseen, I had counted the cost!
I go, unregretting—my life is well lost!

**Avis.**

Mark, thou art raving, and mad he who hearing
Believes in thy guilt!

**Thirza** (*proudly*).

He has spoken the truth, for his hand at my bidding
Those brave beacons built!

**Avis.**

Thou liest, O witch ! dost thou know that he loves me ?

**Crowd.**

Ye heard what he said !
He has owned to the crime !

**Avis.**

Let me speak ! bid them listen !

**Lawrence** (*seizing Avis's arm*).

Be silent, bold maid !

**Avis.**

Unhand me ! speak I will ! (*to the crowd*)
—Ye say he did the deed ?
Now listen to my tale—
And spit on me, but heed !
I gave myself to Mark because I loved him
Too deeply to dread his scorn ;
Last night he came . . . and in my arms I held him
Yea ! till the break of dawn !
(*Sensation*).

**Mark.**

My little Avis, wake ! this is a dream !
Believe her not ! long years ago we loved
As children do, and now that I am lost
Distraught by grief she says this thing to save me.

**Lawrence** (*to Avis*).

Out of my sight ! begone, lest I should curse thee !

**Mark.**

On solemn oath of one about to die,
By the Eternal God who soon will judge me
This child is spotless, pure as driven snow.

**Pascoe** (*stepping forward*).

By that same God . . . is aught 'twixt you and *her* ?
(*Points to Thirza*).

**Thirza** *(pushing the others aside).*

Yea ! all things, all things ! Tenderest friend and truest
To love him was my life ; and now we two
Shall die together . . . love is strong as death !

**Crowd.**

Merciful Heaven, in our midst this sin !
Avaunt thou shameless one, lest thou pollute us.

**Avis** *(frantically).*

Kill, kill them both . . . the traitor and his whore !

**Lawrence.**

Still in our midst, and flaunting loud thy shame ?

*(He seizes Avis and flings her towards the egress of the cave.)*

It is enough ! begone, thou spawn of Hell,
Begone I say ! thou art my child no more.

*(Exit Avis weeping bitterly ; for the first time the sea is heard dashing against the mouth of the cave. The crowd looks round uneasily.)*

**Lawrence.**

Know ye that fifty years ago a traitor
Was caught upon this coast, his black guilt proved,
And in this very cavern left to die ?—
The rising tide came in . . o'erwhelmed, engulfed him . .
Methinks you now can guess why here to-day
I held our solemn court ?

**Crowd.**

We understand.

**Lawrence.**

It is your will that this shall be the fate
Of these, who have conspired against their brethren,
Adulterers and traitors ?

**Crowd.**

'Tis our will !

*(CHORUS.)*

Closed is the court and sealed the doom
Of these, who have stolen our children's bread,
And defiled the hearth where pure, wedded love
Hath held its sacred mysteries !

The mournful cry of circling seagulls
Wailing high o'er the restless waters
  Shall pierce their ears like a curse,
By jaggèd rocks shall their flesh be torn—
And ere their vile members are rent asunder
  Their name shall pass from our land!

---

**Pascoe.**

Not hers! I say this woman shall not die,
Though she be guilty, guiltier far am I!

I set her on my hearth—so young, so tender,
  An old man's—I ask her to endure . . . .
Full well I knew that Heaven could never bless us,
  For unclean was my heart, my love impure!

If she repent not, how shall God have mercy
                Her grievous sin forgive?
Let time be granted! . . . Sorely though she wronged me
                O comrades—let her live!

**Thirza.**

Spare such as kneel and humbly plead for mercy
  I will not live, but die! . . Death is my goal.

**Pascoe.**

Thou art not fit! repent with prayer and fasting
  Save from eternal fire thy sinful soul.

**Thirza** (*SONG*).

When the rivers upwards shall be flowing,
  When the dead wood green with sap hath proved,
Ye may see my heart repentance showing
  For the sin of having lived and loved.

O'er black gulfs my spirit circles, soaring
  Past all Time, above Death's dark decline.
Then shall I for mercy kneel imploring,
  I who knew through him the joy divine?

Sooner far, though loud your curses thunder,
  Though to vultures I be cast a prey,
In the pride of Love's majestic wonder
  I would give myself to him to-day!

**Crowd.**

This woman would'st thou spare, who doth defy
Her God and scorn thee? Leave her here to die!

**Pascoe** (*dragging Thirza towards the entrance of the cave*).

Woman I bid thee follow me!

**Thirza.**

I will not!
My choice is made! 'tis Death I choose, not thee!

**Pascoe.**

Yea! thou art wild to die, that Death may find thee
Here in thy lover's arms! . . . Come, follow me!

**Crowd.**

Hark! hark! The tide is rising . . . let her be!

**Thirza** (*struggling*).

Nay! If from hence thou drag me, dare to part
My love and me, then hear my last curse fall
Like bolt of living flame, forged in my heart
To strike this wicked land and blast you all!

. . . . . .

O Thou, before Whose throne I must appear. . . .

**Crowd.**

Blaspheme not! Hold thy peace, unhappy one!

**Thirza.**

Whether in Heaven or Hell! Give ear! give ear!

**Crowd.**

Yield, Pascoe, yield!

**Pascoe** (*loosing her*).

Enough? . . . God's will be done!
Breathe not with thy last breath those words accurst,
But die . . . e'en as thou wilt . . . unshriven . . . lost!

(*He staggers out of the cavern.*)

**Lawrence.**

Lift up your voices; let the psalm we sing
When souls are passing in their doomed ears ring.

**Crowd.**

Hark the trump of doom—lo, the dreadful day
  Earth and Heaven shrink like a parchèd scroll—
In the Angel's hand see the balance sway,
  Weighed, rejected, lost, erring soul on soul!

(*The crowd slowly leaves the cave.*)

**Thirza.**

On me whose lonely tears thou sawest,
  On him, whose pitying hand sought mine.

**Both.**

On all who sinned in greatly loving
  Shed mercy, O thou Love Divine!

**Crowd** (*departing.*)

It is too late! It is too late!

**Mark.**

Turn those eyes towards me, full of sky and sea
  Where love unquenchable, undimmed doth shine!

**Thirza.**

Vain, vain are all things save thy love and mine,
And now we die together (*the gate clangs to*) Victory!

**Crowd** (*far away*).

It is too late, it is too late!

**Both.**

Love, mouth to mouth we soon shall calm be sleeping
  As we have longed to sleep so oft before . . .
Hear the fierce nuptial song the waves sing, leaping
  Herald of that blest kiss that ends no more.

(*A wave breaks into the cavern*).

Hark the winds shrilling notes! they wail and quiver,
  Love 'tis the viols whose clear tones rejoice;
  Below the ocean's booming mighty voice
Peals like the organ, thundering on for ever.

(*A shaft of sunlight passes through a cleft in the rocks*).

Here comes the golden sun to light our dying,
  Our endless joy, vast as the azure sky;
So, on the sea's great heart together lying
  Let us be swept to our death ecstasy.

(*A larger wave dashes in: the curtain falls*).

THE END.

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